

Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

THE WILD SWAN OF AUSTRALIA.

THE legislative councils of most of the Australian colonies have proclaimed stringent regulations for the preservation of their native animals. The kangaroo, the emu, and the swan are now protected by nearly all the colonial governments, and rigorous restrictions have been issued against their being captured, killed, or hunted; and yet, notwithstanding these official enactments and the more sensible fact that these animals have become very scarce, they are still to a considerable extent hunted in the outlying districts whither the usual course of judicial supervision cannot be expected to extend.

The kangaroo and the emu are typical of the fauna over the whole area of Australia, whilst the swan may be considered particularly characteristic of the western portion of the continent. The first settlement in the western colony was made at the mouth of the river then christened and thenceforward known as the Swan River, and the capital of the colony is situate on this same river; and although, with the growth of the metropolis and its seaport town, the extensive settlements on the river, and the general increase of population, it may be difficult in these days to discover even a single specimen of the swan species anywhere in those localities, there are other parts of the colony where the birds may still be met with in flocks of hundreds.

One has only to glance at a Western Australian postage-stamp to see that the swan is officially recognised as the emblem of the colony. It has been not an entirely unknown thing for some cynical and ill-disposed individuals from amongst that money-making class of people who, under the name of prospectors, visit the colony to look for gold, and whose experience of the western lands is confined to the arid plains of the inland districts, where water is a scarce and costly commodity, and food is obtainable only in the form of tinned goods, to deride the idea of any living animal being used as a representation of the

colony, asserting that the only true and correct emblems of so inhospitable a land are a water-bag and tin-opener! Slight inclination have people of that class, possessed of little but self-considerate and mercenary ideas, to realise the comparison between the dry, sterile tracts of back-country, which form the goldfields where they had fondly hoped their fortunes were to be found, and the beautiful rich alluvial districts of the south-west coast, renowned for its equability of climate and fertility of soil. It is in these parts, where creeks are plentiful and pastures rich, that the tamar and the wallaby, the ibis and the crane, the opossum, the pelican, the duck, and the swan, delight to have their retreats; and it is here also that the perfection of the colony's flora as well as fauna is to be looked for.

The native swan of Australia is not the very beautiful white bird which adorns so many of the English waters, but the more ordinary-looking black swan which is invariably an exhibit of our Zoological Gardens, and is noted more especially for its fierceness and strength. As far as appearance goes, the black swan is certainly not as attractive as its more ornamental cousin, neither would it lend so picturesque an addition to an English landscape; but when seen in its native state, sailing in large flocks peacefully, contentedly, and apparently with perfect unanimity of inclination on some sheltered lagoon, amidst surroundings of rising country clothed with rich herbage and thick virgin forests, its presence and appearance is most impressive, and causes one to feel that the beauties of the scenery around would count for little without the living complement of feathered creatures so sedately and gracefully gliding along the water's surface.

It is a matter of comparatively little trouble to obtain views of these birds in their immense flocks, but the true difficulty is to get them within gunshot range; and in hunting the black swan it must be remembered that the sport is not simply a pleasure and a pastime—the birds

are sought after for a very practical purpose, and their acquisition is of considerable value. It seems hardly needful to refer to their down, but it may be mentioned that that obtained from the breast of these black swans is exceptionally beautiful and snowy white, the outer and coarser black feathers being removed before the down itself is exposed. Although the extent of one breast is small, the covering is so wonderfully thick and spreading that it can be divided up into many yards' length of the finest and softest swansdown.

Supposing we are located for a time in the south-western districts of Western Australia—let us say at Albany, that picturesquely situated and clean little town on the shores of King George's Sound, well named the health-resort of the colony—how are we to set about gaining a glimpse and possibly a shot at these native swans? If the season happens to be towards the end of summer, a day's outing in a buggy and pair some twelve or fifteen miles to the westward towards the Torbay or Wilson Inlets can generally be depended on for affording a good view of one or more flocks on the lakes in the distance; but if the unsophisticated visitor takes out his gun in the hope of obtaining a shot, he will find these distant glimpses a very different matter to the feat of getting the swans within range.

He may wade for hours in the shallow water, hoping to get within even two or three furlongs of the birds, without success; he may divert them from one quarter of the lake, and by the exercise of much exertion and great speed may head them as they are making for another quarter, only to find, however, that his intention has been quickly detected by the ever-wary birds, which turn in a body as if with one impulse and glide away to a distance again, leaving him to wonder at the marvellous keenness of their intellect. He may even, with the assistance of companions, try to circumvent them by posting his men at various points on the lake shore, and at a given signal making a simultaneous descent towards the flock in the centre. In this way he may manage to keep the group in a more confined space and get a trifle nearer to the birds, but with little extra advantage. Perhaps our would-be sportsmen have taken care to employ the stratagem of bearing green boughs for the purpose of disguising their distrusted human nature; but the artifice will prove ineffectual. They will wade on laboriously in the shallow water until, gaining confidence in their leafy covering, they begin to feel their blood rising and throbbing through their veins in increasing excitement as they gradually approach their quarry, when—the space on the lake being now too restricted to allow of their usual evolutions—the whole flock of birds with one accord take to flight, and they soar away up and up, until almost out of sight. One realises how impossible

it would have been to believe that those distant specks were in reality anything more than a group of the tiniest birds. Our dejected sportsmen are then left to gaze and wonder at the marvellous strength of wing these wild birds are possessed of!

If all the usual methods are so equally unsuccessful, how is one to get at these birds? Well, it is not a matter of one outing, or even of three or four days, but rather of weeks; there is only one plan to be adopted, and this, to be successfully carried out, will need perhaps a whole month's attention and care. One must proceed in this way: a raft, flat-bottomed boat, or some such craft must be got quietly and cautiously down to the shore of the lake which the swans frequent—the very best time of day for accomplishing this first step being the early morning soon after dawn, when the birds will very probably be away feeding up some adjacent creek. Great care must be exercised at all times not to disturb the birds, and so cause them to be even more timid and wary than usual. The next step is to thoroughly screen our dingy or raft with dark, thick boughs to prevent any object or any movement inside being observed. The craft thus equipped had better be left quietly on the shore for a day or two, when it can be moved a little, say along the edge of the lake, the intention all along being to get the birds thoroughly accustomed to this new addition to their surroundings, encouraging them in the belief of its innocuous and inanimate character. Gradually the boat may be moved about more, and allowed to drift on the lake, but must always be brought back to shore after its daily cruise, as everything would be upset if the birds once caught sight of a human form wading to or from the craft. It will in all probability be three or four weeks before the swans have become used to this branchy structure and its movements; and until it can be manifestly seen that they entirely disregard its presence it will not be safe to allow it to drift down towards them. This is the last precaution, and then for the grand coup! With three or four shots from each gun in the boat an excellent bag should be assured; but good-bye to the chances of any other party getting near the birds for many a month to come!

This mode of procedure may seem to have the demerit of tediousness and wasteful expenditure of time; but the spending of a few weeks under canvas in the free wilds of Australia, in the closest contact with the picturesqueness of untouched nature, is a delightful and health-giving recreation which must be experienced to be appreciated. When there is added an extra zest in the shape of a novel and engrossing sport, there can be no more inviting and invigorating relaxation from the routine of one's more prosaic and conventional life.

THE LOST CAUSE.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE LAST MESSAGE.

IN truth, Kennett himself was none too soon. The new-comers dashed round the corner within a minute of his departure—six peace-officers in all, well armed and mounted; and behind three of them, having evidently been picked up by the way, were perched the postillions and Joseph.

Staring hard, they pulled up and saluted.

'You would have been of more service ten minutes ago,' said my lord sharply. 'We have been waylaid by a couple of pads, and this gentleman is wounded. We must get him to the nearest inn with all speed'—

'Had we not better carry him to his own house?' I suggested, with his daughter in my thoughts.

'Is it close to this?'

'Not more than a quarter of a mile.'

'The Dower-house be it, then! I have my own scratches to examine—oh, they are not serious, but I am not young enough to neglect them—and so I care not how quickly we seek shelter. Besides, we have *his* feelings to consider—and Miss Hollingworth's.'

Half-an-hour earlier this intimate acquaintance with the circumstances of Sir Charles would have amazed me beyond measure. Now it seemed so natural that I spared it scarce a passing tribute of wonder. I was more surprised by an incident that presently happened. Joseph was fussing round, as if to make amends for his recent conduct; and, having fetched the cloaks of the late combatants, he pressed forward with an object that he had picked up beside them—to wit, Sir Charles's mask and false beard. The man had some intelligence, and I noticed his glance wandering inquiringly to my cousin's prostrate figure. But my lord was not one to be caught napping. He thrust the mask carelessly into his pocket, and then addressed the servant in his sweetest tones.

'So you have returned to your duty?' he asked. 'Well, I have this bit of advice for you—that unless you wish to be whipped at the cart's-tail from Newgate to Tyburn for your cowardice, you will keep a still tongue in your head about your doings to-day.'

Joseph shrank back, abashed and frightened. With him no better method could have been adopted to prevent a disclosure of the truth.

And apparently such was my lord's intention. He permitted the officers no time to grow inquisitive. The coach having been dragged from the ditch without much difficulty, he despatched four of them forthwith in ostensible pursuit of the pads, and ordered them to report to a justice

whom they would find at Devizes; and he had even the forethought to ask them to search out the nearest surgeon—at Seend or elsewhere—and send him post-haste to Langbridge Dower-house. And if the main road were hardly likely to lead them to success—well, he had doubtless other reasons for indicating it.

Two men remained behind for his escort, and with their help Sir Charles was gently placed in the coach. He was still unconscious.

The coach was stopped for a minute or two at the gate of the Dower-house, while I went on alone to warn its inmates of that which was coming. The house looked strangely gloomy to my eyes in the darkness of the overhanging trees; the nature of my mission lay heavy on my spirit; and I had to summon all my resolution to carry it through without faltering. And my task was not lightened when my knock was answered by Kitty herself.

'You, Cousin George?' she exclaimed. Then, catching a glimpse of my tell-tale countenance, a note of anxiety came into her voice. 'Dad—something has happened to him!'

'You must be brave, Kitty,' I said, taking her hand. 'Your father has had a duel with Lord Kynaston'—

Her face blanched. 'Oh! he is not dead?' she cried.

'Not that,' I said. 'But he is wounded—badly, I fear, but we cannot say yet.'

I could perceive that she dreaded the worst, and thought for an instant she would break down. Yet I dared not mislead her, and my faith in her courage was vindicated.

'You are keeping nothing back?'

'Nothing—I know I can trust you to be calm. Now you must get his room ready. He will be here in a minute.'

She rallied nobly at the necessity for action, and at once set about the preparations, calling the maids to assist her; and, in the meantime, I made an opportunity to ask Mrs Herbert to receive my lord and attend to his comfort. The matter was not one with which, just then, I cared to trouble Kitty.

I need hardly have concerned myself. When the little procession presently arrived, she had eyes for nothing save the inanimate form of her father; and as he was carried to his room by myself and one of the officers—who, I had learnt, professed some skill in surgery—she accompanied us upstairs, holding his hand. But, reaching the landing—whence, looking back, I observed my lord being ushered into the parlour by Mrs Herbert—I begged her to stay there until we

had undressed and examined the wounded man. Her suspense must have been hard to bear, but there were measures to be taken which would be still more painful to a delicately nurtured girl. At first, however, she would not hear of it.

'Only for a little!' I pleaded. 'Believe me, Kitty, 'tis for the best. You will but hinder us.'

Then she submitted. 'If I must,' she said. 'And you will let me know quickly, George?'

I gave her my promise; and, with a last glance at her father, she retired. Thereafter our grim work was soon accomplished. The result may be told in a word. My worst anticipations were realised: the hours of Sir Charles Hollingworth were numbered. For the right lung was pierced, and although there was little flow of blood—in itself a doubtful symptom—the indications of the end were too many and too plain to be mistaken.

Having done what we could for him, an effort was used to bring him back to consciousness, and at last was successful. Opening his eyes, he recognised me. Then his gaze rested on the officer; and, not wishing to excite him unduly, I signed to the man to leave the room.

'Ah! I remember it all now,' said he as I leant over him. 'But how did I come here, George?'

'I have the responsibility of that,' I replied. 'Now, you must not move. We have sent for a surgeon, and you are under my orders till he arrives.'

The old smile returned. 'Our positions are changed, then? Well, you had the better luck. I'm bleeding inwards—I knew it from the beginning, George—and not all the surgeons in England can do me any good.'

For a little he lay silent. Then:

'Shall I call Kitty?' I asked him.

'Not yet,' he said. 'I have a word for you first. . . . You will find your valuables in the top drawer there, George—I had always, of course, intended you to have them again. You forgive me that affair? We had news of a messenger for Kynaston, and were after the papers. The rest belonged to the part I was playing, but had I not discovered your name from some letters in your pocket-book—well,' he added, laughing feebly, 'you might not have been rescued so opportunely by Mr Morell! . . . And to think that Kynaston had me in the hollow of his hand all the time! If I had only guessed it— But there! 'twas a crack-brained scheme at the best, and has had a fit ending. If it weren't for Kitty, I should not be sorry to be quit of it all. . . . Poor Kitty!' he went on presently. 'Her only friends are the Sisters at St Cloud—and I have little to leave her but a good name. There will be nothing for her but to go back to the convent, and till she can do so—will you promise to see to her, George?'

'Have you not forgotten that she has other friends—her relations?' said I, revolting from the mere idea of a convent life. 'My mother, for one, would be happy and proud to welcome her as a daughter—indeed, she would never forgive me if I failed in my duty. You will let me take Kitty to her, Sir Charles?'

His hand sought for mine on the counterpane, while his face brightened wonderfully. 'If you would, George!' said he. 'Now I believe that, after all, our meeting was providential, and I can die easier.'

Then I slipped out to Kitty, drawing the door to after me. She was waiting on the landing, and her eyes questioned me with a pathetic little look. But what had I to tell her?

'I am no surgeon, dear'—

She cut me short. 'Oh! I can bear to hear the worst—now.'

'He is quite conscious, and may live for a few hours,' I said gravely. 'You will not talk too much?'

I opened the door, and heard a sob strangling in her throat as she ran to the bedside and fell on her knees beside it. My own eyes, to confess the truth, were not too clear.

'Don't weep, little one,' Sir Charles was saying as I turned away. 'The parting is bitter, but . . . you have your life before you.'

His voice was weaker when I was recalled, a few minutes later, to the bedside.

'We have taken you at your word, George, and settled it all,' said he, 'and from this moment you are Kitty's guardian. I leave her to your charge with the utmost confidence.'

'And I will spare nothing to prove myself worthy of the privilege,' said I. 'But you have spoken enough, Sir Charles. Now you must rest for a little.'

'Does it matter much?' he asked. 'Well . . . a single minute, and I promise obedience. Listen, Kitty! The Prince must be warned—at once, do you understand? There were other plans, and Kennett is too hot-headed—and he must be told that Kynaston knows of his presence here, and has him surrounded. Implore him, as my last request to him, to do nothing more if he values his neck; to flee from England without an hour's delay! . . . And be quick, dear! Even now it may be too late. . . . Ah!'

A thin trickle of blood came from his lips, and he dropped back insensible. His heart was still beating fitfully, but all my attempts to revive him were unavailing.

'Can we do nothing?' cried Kitty, appealing to me.

I shook my head: there was nothing to be done save to watch—for the end.

'And the Prince?' I asked after a time.

'The Prince? . . . Oh! I had forgotten. Must I go, George? Yet I cannot leave dad—thus.'

'He is still at the Hall?'

'Yes.'

I had a sudden impulse. 'If you wish it, Kitty, I will go instead,' I offered. 'I heard the message, and 'twill be better than sending a servant.'

'But you would never find the way through the park in the darkness,' said she, hesitating.

'As to that, one of the maids can easily be my guide.'

Then she agreed, and did so gladly, and I went immediately to carry out my self-imposed duty. While I was waiting in the hall for the maid I was joined by Mrs Herbert, and from her learnt that my lord was closeted with Joseph in the parlour. I had no mind to disturb him just at that moment; and, my guide appearing with a lanthorn, I sent Mrs Herbert upstairs to Kitty, and set forth.

Outside, the officers and postillions were walking their horses up and down the avenue, and trying to keep warm by dint of exercise and much profanity.

'Mighty cold, sir!' remarked one as we passed. 'You can't say if we shall be here long, perhaps?'

'It depends upon his lordship,' I replied, and could give him no further satisfaction.

The night had fallen, but, with a clear sky and the reflection from the snow underfoot, our way was sufficiently plain, and the lanthorn almost a superfluity. The first stage, across the garden to the little bridge, was already familiar to me; and thence we had seven or eight minutes' brisk walking ere we came within view of the lights of the Hall. There, convinced that I should be able to return alone, I dismissed the girl homewards.

A couple of horses were standing in front of the house, ready saddled, and the main-door was wide open. Approaching it, the first man that I perceived was Kennett himself. Habited for riding,

just as I had last seen him, he was pacing the great, dimly-lit, armour-embellished hall; but at sight of me he stopped, and his face flushed a dull red. Then his hand wandered—instinctively, it seemed—to his sword.

'I can guess your errand, Mr Holroyd,' he cried before I could speak. 'But if you come from Lord Kynaston, let me warn you that we shall not be taken alive.'

'You have guessed wrongly,' I replied, misliking his tone. 'I am not here on business, but with a message from Sir Charles.'

'Ah!' A quick breath of relief escaped him. 'The wound is not serious, I hope?'

'He is dying,' I said shortly. 'The message is for the Chevalier. Can I see him?'

He looked as if he were about to deny all knowledge of such a personage, but he thought himself in time that I had other information.

'Impossible!' he exclaimed.

'He is still here?'

'Is it not enough, sir, that you cannot see him?' he demanded, suspicion showing in his eyes. 'If you give me the message, be sure he shall receive it. And, for the rest,' he cried, his temper flashing out, 'your presence in this house is cursedly unwelcome!'

'I have not lacked proof of it,' I retorted. 'As to the message, I have nothing to add. It must be delivered to the Chevalier himself—and to nobody else. If it be not, the blame will be yours for any consequences that may follow.'

I know not how the dispute would have ended had we been left to ourselves, but at that moment 'twas broken in upon by a calm voice behind us.

'Who is this gentleman, Mr Kennett?' it asked.

Turning, I beheld the Chevalier.

FRUIT-FARMING IN SCOTLAND.

PART II.

THE FRUIT-MARKET.

FROM our last article it may be seen that the cultivation of both strawberries and raspberries is itself no sinecure, and that it is no easy matter to produce a good crop of either fruit. Having got his crop, however, the further question remains, How is the farmer to pick and dispose of it? His difficulties with regard to the latter point are by no means small. The small grower, with his acre or half-acre of ground, can always reckon on finding a market for the comparatively small quantity of fruit which he can supply.

He can either sell it for eating purposes, in which case it is usually sent to be sold on commission in the markets of the large towns, or he will have no difficulty in finding a ready sale for it with the jam-makers. But the large grower, who despatches every season from eighty to one hundred tons of fruit, has a more difficult task. Accordingly, every year before the fruit is ripe the grower and the boiler and the ubiquitous middleman begin to haggle over terms. There is perhaps no commodity of trade which is subject to such fluctuations in price as is fruit. The last three or four years have afforded an excellent illustration of this. The price of strawberries in these seasons has varied from ten pounds to thirty

pounds per ton, and that of raspberries from fifteen pounds to the phenomenal rate of forty pounds. At the former prices the cultivation would not pay its expenses, while at the latter the profit would be handsome. How can the grower decide what price he is to hold out for? He cannot wait, with his fruit rotting on the ground. He is perfectly sure that if he stands out for a higher figure prices will go down, and he is equally sure that if he sells at the prevailing rate they will go up; and he has excellent examples from former years illustrating the truth of both his convictions. The mere fact that his own crop is a poor one is no criterion as showing that others are equally poor; and it is the most difficult thing to obtain anything like a reliable report as to the character of the general crop, it being the interest of growers to depreciate and of boilers to exaggerate its size. Another difficulty is to determine the quantity of fruit which he is safe in selling. He meets this as far as possible by selling a certain amount which experience shows him should be well within his margin, and disposing of the remainder as a balance. But since the amount of his balance is necessarily uncertain, the price obtained for it would be lower than that which he would get for a fixed quantity, and the temptation to sell within a very few tons of his estimated crop is strong. A shower of rain at the critical time may make all the difference between ability and inability to fulfil his contracts, and the sanguine man who trusts to luck may find himself with his contracts unfulfilled and not a berry left to supply the deficiency, while the timid man is gnashing his teeth at finding that he has a large and comparatively unremunerative balance.

FRUIT-PICKING.

As, year by year, the area under fruit cultivation increases, there is an increase in the difficulty of picking the fruit. It is absolutely essential to be within reasonable distance of a town; but even so the supply of pickers is no longer equal to the demand. A farm of seventy or eighty acres in fruit will require a constant supply of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty pickers; and even the latter number, in the height of the season, when the raspberries and late strawberries are ripe together, cannot cope with the fruit, tons of which are sometimes lost from inability to pick it. The pickers are divided into gangs of from thirty to seventy, and are under charge of an overseer, who has his hands full in keeping them at work, and checking as far as possible their voracious appetites. His position calls to mind that of a slave-driver; but, unluckily for the grower, his powers are limited by the knowledge of the pickers that if they are unduly driven they have only to cross into the next field, where they will be welcomed with open arms by the rival farmer. The work begins at

about 6 A.M., and is continued, with an interval of an hour for dinner at midday, till 4 P.M. Wages vary from about one shilling and eightpence to two shillings per head, irrespective of the quantity picked. It would appear to be a far more satisfactory arrangement to pay them by the work done, at so much per basket; but in this district no one has yet been able to introduce that system. When the crop is in full swing each picker, if well worked, should be able to gather something over three-quarters of a hundredweight of late strawberries and half a hundredweight of raspberries. It may easily be seen that the small grower, who is able both to weed and to pick his crop with the aid of his family and perhaps half-a-dozen hired hands, has not to meet the difficulties of the large farmer, and that his profits are proportionately larger.

In picking fruit for eating purposes the pickers either carry baskets holding from five to seven pounds, in which the fruit is sent direct to the market, or else gather it into those small punnets containing about a pound, the appearance of which in shops is so familiar to the eye. These punnets are then packed in crates or boxes containing four or five dozen. It is only fair to the retail fruiterer to say that the mysterious law of physics, by which the large berries invariably gravitate to the top of the basket, appears to hold good when the fruit is gathered by unsophisticated rustics, to be sent to market, almost as surely as when it has been prepared for retailing to the public.

FRUIT FOR THE JAM FACTORY.

The method of picking to send to the jam-maker is the same with both raspberries and strawberries. The pickers carry a large basket slung round the neck, which they partially fill with fruit and empty into pails brought round by men specially detailed for the duty. The fruit is then transferred to juice-tight kegs or barrels, and in them is sent to the jam-maker. These vary in size, but are usually constructed to hold about one hundred weight of fruit. It may come as a shock to the consumers of bought jam to learn that the fruit out of which it is made is treated in this cavalier fashion; but it is astonishing to see how fresh and sweet a cask of good honest Scotch fruit will be on its arrival after a journey of thirty-six hours—that is, if it has been picked dry. Unfortunately it is not always dry in Scotland, and a hundredweight of wet fruit, after being jolted over three or four hundred miles in a goods train, is apt to present a somewhat uninviting appearance. Still, if used before fermentation sets in, it makes very nearly as good jam as the dry fruit.

If only Scotch or English fruit were used by the boilers the consumer would have no reason to complain. If he were to see the quality of the foreign fruit with which too many of them

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doctor up their jams he would certainly hesitate before eating. To save a few shillings, a boiler will use barrels of foreign fruit, which he picks up at a low price, and which is nothing more nor less than a seething mass of fermentation, no more fit for human food than any rotten fish condemned at Billingsgate. That some strong measure is required to meet this ever-increasing abuse is certain, in the interest not only of the home-grower, whose margin of profit grows smaller year by year, but also of the consumer, who has a right to expect that his jam shall not be adulterated with this poisonous stuff. Any attempt at obtaining further legislation on the subject is met by the old parrot-cry of protection; but it is surely not demanding very much to insist that jam made either wholly or partly with foreign fruit should be marked as such. If once the public would realise the nature of the stuff which they are sometimes called upon to eat as 'home-grown jam' the evil would not be tolerated for a moment. Even if the provisions of the existing Merchandise Marks Acts were more thoroughly enforced, a great deal might be done to check the evil. Much might be done by railway companies in cheapening their freights, so as to enable home-grown to compete in the market with foreign fruit; and it is only fair to them to say that in the last year or two they have shown some disposition to do this. It must be understood that this indictment is not intended to apply to all jam-makers; but it is an undoubted fact that it does apply to many, and that the quality of the foreign fruit thus used has in no wise been exaggerated in the present description.

LOSSES AND CROSSES.

The quantity of fruit which is despatched all over Scotland, to the north of England, and to Ireland, in the manner described above, is enormous. Given three hundred pickers, picking their proper quantity, one grower will send off his seven or eight tons a day. With so great a quantity, each barrel having to be separately addressed, mistakes must sometimes occur; and, in dealing with such a perishable commodity as fruit, a misdirected barrel may be a total loss to the grower. The picking season is indeed an anxious time for him, and every day brings its cares. One boiler telegraphs to say that his works are closed for a week owing to holidays, and that he cannot take fruit during that time; another that he can only take fruit despatched by an early train; and a third that he has already more on his hands than he can boil, and that he can take no more at present. They one and all,

with surprising unanimity, try to avoid taking fruit gathered on Friday or Saturday, and seem to be entirely oblivious of the fact that it will go on ripening and going to waste on both these days, and even on Sundays also, as much as on any other days in the week. As they have only a short day at their works on Saturday, the boilers expect the fruit to stand still and await their convenience at the beginning of the week. The grower naturally does not see the reasonableness of this, and hence arise many bickerings, and much profit to the telegraph department of the revenue and occasionally also to the legal profession. At the end of a day spent in struggling to extract a reasonable amount of work from lazy pickers, in despatching numerous telegrams to obstinate boilers, and in wrestling with the intricacies of the traffic systems of pig-headed railway companies, who refuse to guarantee connections, the unfortunate farmer is inclined to wish himself well out of the business. Fortunately for his sanity, the season is not of long duration; six or seven weeks see the end of it, and he may then sit down for a short time and count his profits, if he have any to enjoy.

PROFITS.

It cannot be denied that these profits in some individual years are large, and in such they amply repay the trouble and expense of cultivation. They are, however, by no means so large or so regular as they would appear to be to the casual observer, who notes that the farmer may get his ton or two of fruit per acre, and calculates that with reasonable prices he should have a gross return of forty or fifty pounds per acre. The expert who has made an accurate study of the trade—who estimates the expenses of planting, weeding, and picking, and who realises the constant anxieties and heart-burnings which accompany the cultivation, the losses resulting from the inclemencies of the season and the insect pests, and, lastly, the uncertainty whether anything like a fair price will be obtained for the crop—will be disposed to agree with the writer of this article that the lot of a fruit-farmer is not altogether a happy one. The truth of the matter is that this trade, like every other in the country, is being overdone. It is only under very favourable conditions that it can at this date be carried on profitably on a large scale. In short, fruit-farming, while it still affords an opening to a man who will count the cost before he takes it up, is no longer—if it ever was—the farmer's panacea; and the wise man will pause and reflect before following Mr Gladstone's advice to rush into fruit.



A GAME OF WEI-CH'I.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.



WANG's long-cherished ambition of meeting General Ho and accepting his challenge to play a game of *wei-ch'i* was brought within reach by the very act which renunciated it. He had abandoned the *wei-ch'i* board for rebellion, and rebellion had brought him a prisoner into the presence of Ho.

After due consideration I ventured to intercede for Wang, although, by acknowledging that he had been in my employment, it rendered me also a suspect.

'I should be pleased to help you, Kê Hsien-sheng,' Ho replied; 'but you must know that this is a case beyond my powers of interference. The man is at present my prisoner; but when the instructions come from the Board he will be handed over to the civil authorities. If you think you have any sound plea, you may speak to my friend the Chik-fu.'

I knew this Chik-fu, who was named Ta Yüeh; he was an almost nightly visitor of Ho's, being a *wei-ch'i* maniac. But he was not a man I would think of expecting mercy from, being fat, avaricious, and deceitful. Small as my acquaintance was with him, I already guessed, from my frequent presence during their game, that there was something which attracted him to Ho's *yamen* more powerful than the General's *wei-ch'i* skill; and that was the General's *wei-ch'i* board. Ta's chief hobby was curios; he had a fine collection of antiques, and he knew the intrinsic value of them. And Ho's board was probably the most precious curio in the length and breadth of China. It was made of common white porcelain, set in a rude ebony frame, and the men also were mere shapeless pawns of chinaware; but it was of great antiquity, and—this was its value—it was authentically believed to have actually belonged to Confucius. Instead of black and white squares, those which should have been black were darkened by close and beautiful small writing in the epistolary character, each of the 162 squares containing a verse from the master's classics. These were supposed to have been written by a pupil under the great philosopher's own dictation, probably before he revised the 'proofs,' so to speak; for here and there they varied by a word or phrase from the standard text, and it was not credible that any student would commit such a sacrilege or betray such an ignorance as to misquote from the Sacred Bible. Besides, very ancient commentaries were in existence on this identical board; and, finally, a large seal-character *Kung* was carved on the bottom of the ebony—the signature of the master himself. The value of this board, then, was literally inestimable, for I

doubt if such a relic could have been sold for cash without serious danger from the Board of Censors; but if allowed to be auctioned, I believe it would have fetched one thousand pounds. I have not the slightest doubt Chinese connoisseurs would give nearly all they possess to obtain a relic which virtually ennobles the possessor, and such relics become family heirlooms, just as certain jewels do among our own old families. The only way for a foreigner to obtain genuine antiques is to 'be in at the death' of an old family, to wait until they are hard-up, and then very delicately to hint at a mortgage on the heirlooms.

'I could not venture to speak to Ta Lao-yeh,' I replied. 'I am in your excellency's service at present, and I can only intercede with your excellency. This poor Wang! *Wei-ch'i* is responsible for his fault. He came back to Hunan to accept a certain mandarin's challenge at the game, for which he has been studying nearly five years.'

'Ah,' said Ho, 'is that so? I never yet heard of *wei-ch'i* turning a man into a rebel, unless, indeed, it reminds him that China was formerly ruled by Chinese. I will inquire into it.'

Thus it came about that a state-prisoner was permitted to play against his jailer for his life; for it was held that if Wang could beat Ho it would prove conclusively that he could not have found time to be a conspirator. I will not say that any promise was made to this effect; but as he had not yet been proved guilty of rebellion, a virtual promise was made that he should be proved innocent. My evidence of his good behaviour for four years previous to his departure would be supported by the exhibition of his skill; 'And besides,' the fat Chik-fu added slyly, 'a hundred taels will always go a long way in a state trial.' The General did not commit himself to anything; a rebel's life had grown to be a trifling matter in his estimation; but a good game and a flattering proof of the utility of his long-standing challenge were of importance. 'Play with a single mind, Wang Lai-chee,' he said. 'A successful crown to your long study is more desirable than a paltry question of law.'

Thus reassured, Wang commenced the game of his life. Just at first he was naturally nervous, to say nothing of being out of practice and in ill-health; but on the whole these things were really all in his favour. The interval that had elapsed since he last touched a pawn had removed the staleness of long training; and the danger of his position, the disappointment of his failure, and the change from overstrained activity to a narrow, tranquil concentration, all served to sharpen his wits and fortify his natural caution with a certain desperate will. The General captured the first

corner without difficulty, and as he did so I shuddered at the stern, contemptuous eye he rested on his prisoner. The capturing of a corner is the simplest stroke of the game, only requiring two moves; but as the moves are made alternately, it is equally easy to frustrate. Ho placed his first man on one of the two points; Wang should have occupied the other, or made a counter-demonstration against another corner. Instead of doing so, he placed his man by the side of Ho's; and it was at this exhibition of ignorance that the General's eye seemed to say, 'You do not know the game. Woe for you, my man.' Seven moves later Wang laid down his pawn and said quietly, 'I eat your excellency.'

With three men he had drawn a line across the captured corner, thus scoring three points—the corner, and the two occupied by Ho. He had turned his mistake into a stratagem. The General evacuated his positions with an approving nod, and thenceforth looked to himself. By the end of the first night's skirmish Wang was accepted both by his opponent and Ta, who was umpire, as a respectable antagonist.

The game, I must add, was played on the famous 'board of Kung Fu' which I have mentioned; this was one of the privileges held out by Ho to aspirants in his original challenge ten years ago, and Wang had proved his acquaintance with the matter by reminding him of it. This alone was something for a student to boast of in after-years, that he had actually played on 'Kung's board.'

This fact proved an intense attraction to the Chik-fu, Ta. Ho had, I believe, shown him the relic on his sombre ebony cabinet; but it was a very different thing to see the precious plaque daily used before his eyes, under the bright light of the electric lamps with which I had been instrumental in furnishing Ho's *yamen*. The game was continued nightly, and every night Ta was present, however pressing the work at his own *yamen* in connection with Wang's rising; and every night the greedy acquisitiveness with which he eyed the board seemed to increase, until I was really alarmed lest he should steal it. On the third night Wang had enclosed thirteen points to the General's ten; they played very slowly now, and each isolated position was taken and retaken, mined or outflanked, before it was definitely secured and left for new developments. At the beat of the first watch (between one and two in the morning), when the play ceased for the night, Ta beckoned to his pipe-bearer, who went out to the Chik-fu's sedan-chair, and returned with something wrapped in a cloth.

'What is this?' said Ho, passing a hot-water towel over his face, as he always did after play, dropping it back in the basin, and taking his water-pipe from another attendant. 'What surprise have you got there, Yüeh?'

Ta Yüeh displayed a very costly *wei-ch'i* board

of jade, set in a copper frame with gilded legs, beautifully carved. 'A wager!' he cried playfully; 'it is very certain you are getting beaten, General, and I desire to stimulate your skill. My board against yours that you lose; come now—*hao pa?*'

The General examined the jade board. Its intrinsic value was great, and the enamelling of the lines and coloured squares exquisite and rare. The three hundred men were also all of jade, white and green, admirably carved in imitation of the 'warrior' statue at the Ming Tombs, and representing a considerable weight of that most costly of stones. The General was not a collector of antiques, and was more pleased with things of showy value; but the Kung board was an heirloom.

'Positively, I swear you are afraid of being beaten!' said Ta when Ho refused; and with a little badinage he secured his aim; and Ho, who could not believe that he would not win, accepted the wager. To a certain extent he was a just man, and I think the argument which persuaded him was that it was unfair that he should play without risk, while Wang was playing for his life. But he may have supplemented his justice by the consideration that his only risk was exchanging a relic he dared not sell for one he could, and at a good price, too.

A large number of pieces were now on the board, and Ho confided to me after his visitor and prisoner had gone that he was uneasy lest some one should tamper with the game. During the day the table was always left *in statu quo*, the door of the room being locked. I suggested that, considering the importance this game might have for future students, it would be a good idea to photograph the board nightly, so that the whole course of the game could afterwards be printed for their use. Ho liked the idea, and gave me permission to fix my detective camera in the square lamp of coloured glass hanging over the table, focussed downwards; in this way he had only to press the air-ball which hung down a little lower than the bead tassels of the lamp, and so secure a negative of the play at any time. I took one that night to get the focus, and developed it to prove my suggestion in the morning. The apparatus was fixed during the day.

During the day I also obtained the favour of visiting Wang in prison. He had been lodged, together with the rest of the captives, in the common jail at first—a large, tumble-down cattle-pen, too filthy to describe. When the game began he was removed to a solitary cell, both in order that he might be able to present himself in comparative cleanliness, and to escape the questions of his fellow-prisoners, who would interpret his nightly examinations, unaccompanied by marks of torture, as a proof that he was betraying them. The Chik-fu, as prefect of the capital *fu*, superintended the prisons; and after the wager he

immediately saw to it that Wang should be comfortably housed and fed, as the stakes depended on his conduct.

Wang informed me that he was in dire misgiving about his relatives. It is the first principle in Chinese criminal investigation to secure all the near relatives of the accused; and he knew that the Chik-fu had already despatched his runners to Kiu-kiang, on the strength of the information I had given about him. About his wife's family he did not care so much, for they had always sponged on him and derided him; but concerning his brothers he was very anxious. If they were arrested at the porcelain factory their chance of re-employment would be gone even if he could absolve them of all suspicion of complicity. But he had an idea that if he won the game of *wei-ch'i* the General would never forgive him for being the cause of his losing the famous old porcelain board. But if the General could get an exact duplicate of the board he could conceal the loss from his relatives, if he *should* lose, and be more secure from theft if he retained it. Besides, a good imitation of an antique is always valuable.

Now, Wang believed that, with the assistance of his brothers and certain materials they could obtain at Nau-chang, he could imitate the plaque. He had closely studied it during the play, and he knew both the clay, glazing, and blue required. His business during his service in the imperial factories was that of imitating antiques; and the chief difficulty in the present case, that of a certain dullness in the clay and crackle on the glaze, he had already mastered in copying an old saucer sent down from the emperor's collection. Imitation, it must be understood, is not a fraud in China; it is an art. A good imitator is considered a higher artist than an originator.

Wang, therefore, wanted me to convey a letter

to his brothers, telling them to come to Wu-chang with the requisite materials, and then to suggest the imitation to Ho. The knowledge of the secret alone would probably be sufficient to obtain for them the General's protection.

I promised to do this. I saw several objections to the idea, flaws of obvious common-sense which are always manifest in the far-seeing subtleties of the Asiatic intellect; but I forbore to urge them. I cannot tell you how sorry I felt for the poor fellow, and how elevated he had grown in my respect. I perceived now that I had had for my servant a poet, an artist, a dreamer, a man of considerably higher attainment and finer clay than myself. There was something foredoomed and tragic in his calmness. He was tranquil, clear, and quietly insistent; but his deep-sighted eyes and transparent pallor told me that this practical foresight of his was the result of an unnatural fever, and that his sudden immersion in active affairs had been a shock and improper strain on a mind naturally sedentary and introspective; and his anxiety about his relatives, his indifference to himself, bespoke that unconscious premonition of the clairvoyant intellect which is more alarming to the practical man than any actual danger.

I sent a trusted servant and former friend of Wang's post-haste to Nau-chang by the first down-steamer, and within a week his brothers had arrived. I then suggested to Ho the advisability of copying the porcelain board, since Wang believed he could do it; and Ho entrusted it to him. He had Wang removed to his own *yamen*, and the three brothers closeted together at work during the day. He made a plausible excuse to Ta concerning the substitution of a commoner board, without, of course, giving him the least hint of what was doing. Meanwhile the game proceeded.

INVISIBLE LIGHT.



HE thoughtful have scarcely yet recovered from the astonishment caused them by the discovery of the power of the Röntgen rays, and have not yet, indeed, quite realised the magnitude of the outlook opened up by the invention—an outlook whose horizon is, in fact, widening every day.

That such a discovery should be the precursor of further revelations on similar lines was a foregone conclusion; and among these must be noted the successful experiments made by Monsieur Le Bon, the French scientist, reported recently in the *Science Française*. The Röntgen rays require delicate and costly instruments, which are not within the reach of all purses or all laboratories; it is therefore good news for those

interested in such studies that M. Le Bon announces that without an electric current, without a Crooke's tube, by the aid of a simple petroleum lamp alone, it is possible to render objects visible, even though concealed by absolutely opaque coverings—to realise, indeed, all the marvels of the Röntgen rays.

He has been experimenting for some time in this direction, and has made some very striking and surprising discoveries. The first, which originally met with little credence, but which he has since, it is said, successfully demonstrated, is an entirely new conception of light. Henceforward we shall have to admit that all sources of light furnish rays invisible as well as visible to the human eye. Up to the present it has been supposed that the 'X' or cathodic rays alone

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possessed this power; but this idea has been proved erroneous. A candle, a lamp of any sort, a match even, furnishes two sorts of light—the one limpid, clear, luminous; the other non-luminous, invisible, which has very stupidly been named *lumière noire*—‘black light,’ or ‘dark light.’

The characteristic property of this invisible light—a property which it shares with the X-rays—is its power of penetration, its faculty of piercing opaque substances. Its existence is to be proved, according to the French scientist, in the simplest way, and with the most rudimentary of apparatus. For this experiment all that is required is a petroleum lamp, which is enclosed in a case made of sheet-iron, and a fragment of any printed journal. This paper is placed in a wooden box, which is then so arranged that it stands close against the metal sides of the case containing the lamp. M. Le Bon has discovered two processes by which the journal can be read while still enclosed in the box. The first of these, which takes the longer time, consists in adjusting in the front of the wooden box a sensitised plate, which, when developed in the ordinary photographic manner, reveals the text of the paper. By the second method the printing may be read immediately, in the most complete obscurity, and although entirely concealed by the wooden box. To demonstrate this, the lamp and newspaper having been arranged as previously described, a screen covered with sulphuret of

zinc is placed in front of the box. This becomes luminous, and reveals distinctly the printed characters.

What really happens is this: The invisible rays emitted by the petroleum lamp have penetrated both the sheet-iron case and the wooden box, and have reached the fragment of newspaper; and as the lamp-black, which forms one of the ingredients of printing-ink, prevents their passing, the letters are faithfully reflected on the screen. They appear like shadows on its luminous surface, illuminated by the rays that have not been intercepted.

This experience seems to prove beyond denial the existence of an invisible light with great powers of penetration, and which is always to be found as an accompaniment to visible light. The case may be simply expressed thus: There are really no opaque bodies; all substances are transparent; but, our eyes being blind to the invisible light, we fail to recognise this translucency. Like the X-rays, this newly-discovered light will operate on photographic plates, as well as render sulphuret of zinc luminous in obscurity; but it has not the same force of penetration as the Röntgen rays, and the latter will therefore be of greater service medically. The great difference between the two is that the invisible light penetrates objects very slowly. It has been noticed that as long as sixty seconds have elapsed before the radiations have reached the screen.

THE RAVEN OF FLAMBORO.

By ALICK MUNRO.

I.



ONLY once kissed Dorothy Lassen, and that was on the day when she told me she was going to marry Colin Magrath. But then, unfortunately, I am old enough to be Dorothy's father; and, as she takes a cruel delight in recognising the fact, I was immediately pardoned. Therefore, with the perverseness of an elderly lover, I lost my temper—simply because I saw I had not annoyed her in the slightest.

Dorothy laughed, and promptly put my name at the head of her list of devoted and unreasoning slaves; whereupon I recovered my temper, and accepted the position and its responsibilities.

Before her engagement had lasted a month Dorothy was in trouble, and of course she came to me for help. She walked straight into my office, and, taking not the smallest notice of the clerk who was with me, plumped down into my arm-chair, and burst into tears.

I dismissed the clerk hurriedly.

‘My dear child!’ I said in consternation, ‘what on earth is the matter?’

‘Oh, Mr Rudd!’ she sobbed; ‘it’s Colin. He has been arrested.’

‘The scamp!’ said I energetically. ‘What for?’ She looked up at me angrily, I think. ‘Mr Rudd, he didn’t do it.’ And then came another tornado of grief.

‘Of course not!’ I pronounced soothingly; ‘I know he didn’t. But you haven’t told me yet what it is that he didn’t do.’

‘They have arrested him for murder.’

‘What?’ I cried, and for a second wondered whether she was hoaxing me.

‘They say he has killed his brother. But he didn’t—he didn’t!’

‘Killed his brother?’ I repeated wonderingly.

‘I thought Colin was an only son.’

‘There’s a brother Robert, but he has lived abroad for a long time.’

‘Ah! And is never spoken of! Then there are reasons?’

'Yes.'

'Do you know their nature?'

'No. But what do they matter?' she cried impatiently. 'How can I save Colin?'

'Tell me the facts.'

Now, Dorothy Lassen is a brave girl; consequently she dried her eyes, and gave me a summary which would have done credit to a *Times* paragraphist. Colin Magrath had gone to Bridlington to see his brother, who had sent for him on urgent business. They went out together in a small boat. Next morning the boat was found on the shore, half-way between Bridlington and Flamboro' Head. There were footmarks in the wet sand, leading from the boat to the face of the cliff, where they were lost above the tide-mark. They were the footprints of one man only; and as Robert was not seen again, and had not paid for the boat, the waterman gave information to the police.

During the course of the next day a straw hat was picked up in the water, with Magrath written on the lining. A search was made; but they found nothing more until after the storm of Friday, when a body was washed ashore. It was battered almost out of recognition by the waves; but the doctor who gave evidence at the inquest proved that a large gash in the hair just above the right ear was covered with matted blood, and must therefore have been made some time before the man fell or was thrown into the water. Death, in the doctor's opinion, was due, not to drowning, but to a violent blow on the head with some sharp instrument. 'And,' sobbed Dorothy, breaking down again, 'they dare to say my Colin did it! Horrible! horrible!'

'What is Colin's story?'

'That his brother landed him near the Head, and then started to row back to Bridlington alone.'

'Do you know of any quarrel between them?' I asked.

Dorothy caught the implied suggestion, and the look she gave me made me feel caddish and small.

'Mr Rudd, Colin simply couldn't quarrel with anybody!'

I shook my head, but didn't dare actively to dispute the theory. Besides, I had never met the young man.

'I will go and see him,' I said, 'and make arrangements for his defence.'

'Oh, thank you!' cried Dorothy; 'I knew you would. And tell him that Dorothy knows he is innocent.'

II.

I STARTED on my mission feeling sorry for young Magrath, and I returned with my toes itching to kick him. He received me coolly enough; and the very first glimpse I had of his face set my back up. I have, I am sorry to say, contracted

the bad habit of reading people's expression—a seductive amusement, but dangerous.

I introduced myself, and gave him Dorothy's message.

'Ah!' he said. 'She knows I'm innocent, does she? Really, Mr—er—Rudd, I think you said—doesn't that strike you as rather strange?'

I stared at the fellow in amazement.

He laughed softly. 'You don't follow me? Yet the point is obvious enough: How can she know anything about it? Why, my dear Mr Rudd, I don't even know as much myself.'

'Really!'—I began, and then stopped, utterly dumfounded.

'Of course,' he went on suavely, 'I shall plead not guilty. It's always the best thing to do in these cases. By the way, am I right in presuming that you wish to offer your services?'

'That,' I said stiffly, 'was my intention; but of course if'—

'Oh, not at all. I shall be delighted. But I had a notion that touting was forbidden in your profession.'

'Sir!'

'I was wrong? Ah, well, I frequently am. You must remember I'm an outsider, and professional etiquette has been known to puzzle even the initiated. I perceive we shall be great friends, Mr Rudd.'

'Do you?' I retorted hotly. 'I am vastly obliged!'

'Not at all; not at all. Merely a case of natural affinity. You show enterprise in extending your *clientèle*; and I admire you for that enterprise, because, as my present position perhaps suggests, I am myself a man of energy. You start? My dear sir, in that nervous movement I detect another bond between us; you are, like myself, a man of scrupulous honour. Consequently, you would scorn to identify yourself with my interests if you thought me guilty. I congratulate you, sir! The sentiment does you credit, and I hasten to relieve your mind by assuring you that the reference to my present position was used merely for the sake of the illustration; there is no implied confession of guilt in it. Besides, I think I told you I meant to plead not guilty.'

The impudent cynicism of the man revolted me, and I consider it a great proof of self-control that I did not lose my temper. But for Dorothy's sake, I would have closed the interview there and then.

'Understand me, sir,' I said frigidly. 'I am here because I am Miss Lassen's friend, and for that reason alone I am willing to do my best for you. Otherwise, your refined insolence would'—

He interrupted me with a laugh. 'What! A humorist too! Really, Mr Rudd, you are a man worth knowing! "My refined insolence!"

Charming, I assure you. Paradoxical perhaps, but quite good. You are fond of epigrams?'

I made an impatient gesture.

'Ah, a quick temper also, I see! Quite right, Mr Rudd, quite right! A man is all the better for being a little bit touchy; it is a quality which commands respect.'

I was beginning to show my anger, and that is a thing which, in business, I never allow myself to do.

'Excuse me,' I said; 'we will, if it is all the same to you, postpone this analysis of my character.'

'Certainly, my dear sir, certainly—though I admit I abandon the discussion with regret. The study of human nature is to me always enthralling.'

'Even when the rope is dangling round your neck?' I could not help suggesting.

'Even if the said rope were tightening, Mr Rudd. But you seem to have misunderstood the situation. I am in no danger.'

'You have a defence, then?' I asked eagerly.

'N—no,' he drawled. 'I can't say I have.'

'Then I confess I don't understand you.'

'My dear Mr Rudd, you are not showing the perspicacity I should have expected. If my unfortunate brother has been killed—and, mark me, I don't necessarily admit the fact—there is no proof whatever that I am his murderer. You must see that.'

'No direct evidence,' I admitted.

'Exactly. And no circumstantial evidence of any importance. They have stumbled on one or two links, I allow; but one or two links don't make a chain, even in the optimistic legal mind.'

'Others may be forged,' I remarked grimly.

'Pooh! No. I happen to know that they won't.'

'How?'

'Ah! you must excuse me; that is my secret. You have been good enough to volunteer to undertake the case; but you must expect no assistance from me. Take my advice and treat the whole matter as a joke. I myself am quite convulsed with the humour of the situation.'

'Indeed!' I retorted hotly. 'I confess I can't find anything funny in it, either for you or for Miss Lassen.'

'Poor Dolly! she has no sense of humour. By-the-bye, that reminds me: will you do me a favour? Kindly write these six words, "*The raven is hungry: feed him.*" Put the message into an envelope addressed to Mona, care of Mrs Amos, Tobacconist, Filey; and I shall be eternally obliged. I would not trouble you, but unfortunately the Post-Office does not offer its usual facilities to Her Majesty's temporary guests.'

I wrote the words down mechanically.

'You will do it?' he went on. 'Thank you!'

And now, don't let me detain you further; I have immensely enjoyed this interview. You'd rather not shake hands? My dear Mr Rudd, your discrimination is wonderful. Good-bye for the present.'

He bowed me out of the cell, and I returned to my office, walking at the rate of five miles an hour to cool myself. I have never been nearer committing an assault in my life.

III.



WHEN Magrath's case came on everything went against him, and I by no means shared his jaunty confidence in an ultimate acquittal. There was one very painful incident. Dorothy, contrary to my strongly expressed advice, was in court; and when the prisoner was led in she rose and stared at him with her eyes widely dilated, and a look of deathly terror shining in them. Then, in a low, clear voice, which was heard all over the court, she pronounced the words, '*That man is guilty!*' and dropped down in a dead faint. There was a sensation of course, and she was carried out of the court.

Her cad of a lover was the only one who was not affected. He laughed cynically, and I quite failed to persuade myself that his laughter was hysterical.

'So the fair Dolly has revised her judgment of me,' he said lightly when I visited him in his cell after the trial. 'Really, I'm afraid she is fickle, Mr Rudd.'

'You miserable cad!' I growled angrily. 'I believe you're guilty.'

'Of course you do—since the lady says so. You're a man of gallantry, I see. By the way, did you post that letter for me?'

'Yes,' I answered sullenly.

'Then I have to thank you. Now, I wager Mona will not be so ready to believe evil of me.'

'Who is Mona?' I asked suspiciously.

'Ah!' he laughed; 'it's safer not to tell you. A man of your high sense of honour might find it impossible to keep the secret.'

'Look here, Mr Magrath,' I said. 'I need no further proof that you are a scoundrel; but I have not quite made up my mind whether or not you are a murderer. You refuse to give me any help, so I warn you I shall try to do without it. And if my investigations result in my having to throw up the case, I don't know that I shall be sorry.'

He changed colour, but whether through anger or fear I could not tell.

'Turning nasty, Mr Rudd? Bah! You will find out nothing.'

'You hope so,' I said viciously, and watched the effect of my words.

'The prisoner is not bound to incriminate himself,' he quoted evasively. 'What shall you do?'

'Interview Mona. I am curious about that hungry raven.'

'Oh, that's it, is it? Well'—and he drew himself up in a theatrical attitude—'villain, I defy thee! Do thy worst!'

'I will,' said I cheerfully, and left him.

IV.

MRS AMOS, Tobacconist, Filey, was not disposed to be communicative. She didn't know who I might be, to come pokin' my nose into what didn't concern me, and she wasn't going to tell me nothing—not she! So I could just take my ounce of 'navy cut' and my change, and walk out of her shop as fast as I liked!

Her probity, I saw, was not to be corrupted by blandishments, so I took another line. Putting on my keenest look, I murmured mendaciously the one word 'Detective.' The old lady caved in at once.

'I'm sure, sir, I beg your pardon; but I didn't know you was a police gentleman. I 'ope as poor Mrs Magrath isn't in any trouble.'

'Mrs Magrath is the person who receives letters addressed to Mona?'

'Yes, sir. They lodges with me.'

'They?' I asked, with incautious eagerness.

'Her and her husband; only Mr Magrath has been away for the last few days.'

'Ah, exactly! I forgot her husband,' said I, and tried to conceal my surprise. 'Will you tell Mrs Magrath that a gentleman has called to see her on business? You need not mention the fact that I am connected with the police.'

'She's out, sir—went out just before you came; but I expect you could catch her up. She mostly walks along the cliffs towards Flamboro.'

'How shall I recognise her?'

'Easy enough. She's got a white basket with food in it for the sea-gulls, which she says she's sorry for, because the poor things looks so wild and hungry.'

Food! Could it be for—'How often has she done this?' I asked quickly.

'Only yesterday and to-day, sir.'

It was for the 'raven!' I took a hurried leave of the obliging Mrs Amos, and started in pursuit of Mona.

Now, I yield to no one in my admiration of moonlight effects on the water, especially as seen from a Yorkshire chalk-cliff; yet, but for the fact that I was able from a distance of over eighty yards to see everything that Mona did, I should not now be in a position to declare whether there was a moon that night or not. At first my anger against the scoundrel who had so deceived my little favourite kept all other thoughts out of my head, and afterwards, when I came in sight of my quarry, the task of seeing everything without being seen was quite enough employment for even a legal brain.

The lady walked fast and far—too fast and too far for my comfort. But I put my years in my pocket, and tracked her like a young spaniel. She led me to within a mile of the Head, and then stopped. Crouching in the shadow of a thorn hedge, I was able to watch every movement. She took a parcel from her pocket, and then, having tied a long piece of string to it, lowered it, as it seemed to me, straight down into the solid earth. I waited and wondered. For a minute she stood motionless, in the strained attitude of one who listens intently. Then, giving a little gasping sob, she hurriedly snatched up her basket and started running quickly back towards Filey; and when I lost sight of her at a turn of the path she was still running.

I went to explore the place where I had seen the parcel disappear. It was a rough piece of ground, covered with sharp jags of limestone, and overgrown with a clinging tangle of brambles; but not a sign of opening could I see except an old rabbit-hole. I poked my stick into this to try its depth, and found that even when I thrust my whole arm in I could still wave the stick freely about inside. A strange sort of rabbit-hole this! I bent down to the mouth of it and whistled a bugle-call; the sound was doubled and redoubled in the hole; and after quite fifteen seconds I still heard a faint echo of the call coming back to me as a mysterious whisper from the depths of the earth. The rabbit-hole must be in communication with one of the limestone caves of Flamboro! I could not discover any indication of an entrance below; but as at that point there was no beach, and the sea even at low-tide washed the base of the cliff, it was quite possible that there might be a water-covered mouth to the cave. I marked carefully the appearance of the cliffs nearest to me, and then hurried back to Filey at a pace which, for a man of my years and profession, was not dignified, and in daylight would hardly have been respectable.

Late though it was, I managed to persuade a boatman who had the reputation for knowing ever inch of the Flamboro cliffs to take me by water to the place where I had found my rabbit-hole. I pointed out the spot to him, and asked if there was a cave.

'Yes, sir; there be,' he said. 'But you can't get into it till the turn of the ebb, and that'll be a good three-quarters of an hour yet.'

'Then we will wait,' said I.

'Askin' yer pardon, sir, it's a queer time o' night to go cave-huntin'. What is it yer after?'

'A man.'

'Hiding, is he?' said the fellow philosophically. 'Well, he's chosen a rum place.'

I thought of Mona's terror and of my unanswered call.

'Heaven grant he be alive!' I murmured.

When the tide reached its lowest point we rowed to the cave's mouth. The distance from

the arching roof to the water was barely thirty inches.

'No use, sir; the boat won't go in. So'—he added, with a gleeful chuckle—'unless you've a mind to wait here till the next spring-tide, you can't touch the poor beggar.'

'How deep is the water?'

'Happen three feet.'

'Then I shall wade. Give me the lantern, and wait for me.'

I jumped overboard; the water hardly reached above my knees; but before I had gone five steps it began to deepen rapidly, and I thought I should have to turn back. All at once, however, the cave opened out, and I saw a steep shelving beach on the left, for which I made; and then stood, gazing with a shrinking horror at the weird scene around me. The feeble light of the bull's-eye lantern which I carried made the gloomy recesses of the cavern appear by contrast only the more vast and fearsome in their threatening silences. I wondered in what corner of all this black immensity I should find that which I sought. A shadow at a little distance caught my eye; I crept forward to see what it was. There before me lay a man, to all appearance dead; and the face, feature for feature, was that of the jeering scoundrel who had so lately bowed me out of his cell.

v.



AS soon after my return from Filey as possible I went to see Dorothy, for I judged that hers was the anxiety which it was my first duty to relieve. I found her utterly unnerved by excitement and grief. 'Child,' I said kindly, 'I have good news for you; I have proofs that Colin Magrath did not kill his brother.'

She looked at me in a dazed sort of way that was very pitiful. 'I don't understand,' she said simply; and then, in a weary tone, 'I forgot; you don't know. That man is not my Colin.'

'What!' I cried. 'Then who is he?'

'Robert, the brother.'

'Robert! Then the man I rescued from the cave'—

She interrupted me with a cry. 'You have found Colin? Oh, Mr Rudd! tell me you have found my Colin alive!'

'I suppose so,' said I. 'That is, if'—

'Take me to him,' she demanded.

Now Dorothy was ill, and in my opinion ought to have been in bed; but none the less I could not refuse her. I told her all I knew, and drove her to the station in time to catch the Filey train. Then, as there were several things which I did not understand, I went to interview the prisoner.

'Glad to see you, Mr Rudd,' he said jauntily. 'How is my *fiancée*?'

'Your brother's *fiancée* is quite well, Mr Robert Magrath,' I replied pointedly.

'Ah!' he laughed, 'so you have found me out. Really, you'll make quite a good detective in time. What else have you discovered?'

'I have rescued a raven which was at the point of death.'

'Very pretty, Mr Rudd, very pretty! The metaphor, however, was mine in the first instance, I believe. Still, Mr Rudd uses it aptly, as I should have expected he would.' He bowed to me ironically. 'Well, I suppose we may as well conclude that, thanks to you, my game is up. *Vae victis*. I bow to my conqueror. Is there anything in which I can further oblige Mr Rudd?'

'Tell me your motive for imprisoning your brother.'

He hesitated for a second, and then replied lightly, 'Money, of course!'

'I don't believe you,' said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. 'You don't? Even when I tell you that my brother is insured for twelve thousand, and has foolishly made no will? I have friends who would have released him when I had got beyond the reach of extradition law,' he added significantly.

'No,' said I. 'You're a scoundrel, I know; but not *that* kind of scoundrel.'

He flushed, and I believe that it was pleasure and not anger which called the blood to his cheeks.

'Thank you,' he said simply; and then with a laugh: 'Well, I'll submit another motive to you: I had a score to pay off against my brother, because some years ago he behaved badly to me—or I behaved badly to him. Choose which theory you like; one of them is the truth, but you'll never find out which. I won't tell you, and I don't think Colin will. Any other information, however, which I can give you I shall be delighted'—

'Mona?' I asked.

'Is my loving and very obedient wife.'

'And the man who was washed ashore?'

'Is a puzzle to me too. And, by the way, with regard to him, I played my hand atrociously. I should never have identified him as my brother. It was a false card, and the police trumped it when they, very, naturally, arrested me for the murder.'

'Do you know, Mr Magrath,' said I quite honestly, 'against my own will I admire you? Your impudence is so beautifully consistent.'

'Ah!' he said, with a mock sigh; 'then I have not lived in vain. "Approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley"—you know the rest.'

That was my last conversation with Robert Magrath. The murder prosecution of course fell through, and Colin would allow no other to be instituted. It was subsequently proved that the

body which was washed ashore was that of the victim of a tragedy on board one of the boats of the North Sea fishing-fleet. I have recorded the story elsewhere.

I never solved the other problem. Colin would tell me nothing; and even my little friend Dorothy, at her husband's bidding no doubt,

always managed to change the subject when I showed signs of becoming inquisitive.

After all, there are some secrets into which even the dual character of solicitor and friend of the family does not entitle one to pry. To be perfectly ingenuous, I must confess that I have not found them very numerous.

THE 'PREACHING-PITS' OF CORNWALL



SCATTERED throughout the length and breadth of Cornwall are innumerable disused mine-shafts, as might be expected in a county whose mining industry has existed for considerably over twenty centuries. When the lodes of tin and copper gave out, or became too poor to pay for the working, the mines were abandoned, leaving either innumerable yawning chasms or shafts hundreds of fathoms deep to scar the face of the country. In time the woodwork which had been placed as a lining to the shafts to support the sides rotted away, and, as a result, the sides caved in and fell into the shaft, and so formed a pit. In many cases the 'run-in,' as this caving-in is termed, formed a perfectly circular pit in the shape of an inverted truncated cone, sometimes measuring over a hundred feet in diameter at the surface, and from thirty to forty feet in its greatest depth. Where the ground was more 'rubbly' the pit would be wider and deeper.

When the great religious revival under the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield took place, Cornwall was one of the counties in which the movement took deep root. Chapels sprang up very quickly; but until these were built the revivalists looked about for places in which they might worship without molestation. Some genius saw great possibilities in these 'run-in' mine-shafts, and so the 'preaching-pit' became an accomplished fact. The bottoms of the pits were levelled, and on the sloping sides rude seats were formed by cutting the earth into tiers of steps and covering them with turf. A high bank was raised at one side for the preacher, and an opening was cut so as to give easy access to the pit. In some cases a railing was erected round the outer edge, having an entrance-gate.

In these rude, improvised amphitheatres, eminently suited to the rough, emotional nature of the Cornish miner, revival services were held, and hundreds of converts were 'brought in,' as the Cornishman terms it. With nothing but the blue sky above and the green grass below, the pit crowded tier above tier with solemn-faced religionists, listening with bated breath to the denunciation of the sinner and the exhortation to flee from wrath eternal; the young, dark-haired,

blue-eyed lads and maidens sitting hand-in-hand, as is the custom with Cornish lovers, and their elders nodding and shaking their heads as they agree or disagree with the remarks of the preacher, occasionally emitting a groan or an 'Amen;' while over all, the gathering gloom completes the solemnity of the scene, and makes it a fit subject for the brush of a Rembrandt. Then, when the hymn, rolling from a thousand throats and echoed from the pit-sides, had been sung, followed by the prayer, in which the entire spirit of the supplicant was poured forth with violent gesticulations and contortions of body, to the accompaniment of 'Amens,' groans, and 'Hallelujahs' of the believers, mingled with cries and shrieks from the 'unsaved,' it would seem as if the spirit of the ancient Druids had survived through the centuries in this remnant of Britain's ancient people.

These 'preaching-pits' are all situated in West Cornwall. That at Gwennap, near Redruth, is the largest and best known. It is forty-seven yards in diameter, and will accommodate ten thousand people. In Wesley's time it was very much larger. Others are situated at Newlyn East, near Newquay, and at Indian Queen's, near Truro. The pits are not now regularly used as places of worship; but on Bank Holidays special services are held in them, and they are used also on the occasion of a Sunday-school treat. At such times they are well worth visiting.

A SONNET.

So soft your words were when you went away,
So smooth your brow the while you said good-bye,
So deep the tranquil candour of your eye,
So calm the peace that like a halo lay
Around your head. Had you no wish to stay
A little longer with us? or a sigh,
The while the death-mist and the grave drew nigh,
To mourn the fleetness of your shortened day?

Had earth no joys wherewith to tempt you, sweet?
Was life so heavy with its weight of woe
That, in the turmoil of the market-street,
You should be weary ere the sun was low?
Was Earth so sad it could not stay your feet?
Or Heaven so fair that you were fain to go?